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C H A R G E

To the

C L E R G Y

Within the

Archdeaconry of *Bedford*:

In which are some REMARKS concerning
the late Application of the *Dissenters* for a
REPEAL of the *Test-Act*.

Deliver'd at a VISITATION Held at *Ampthill*,
April 30th, 1736.

To which is prefix'd a former CHARGE, containing
some Animadversions on the Growth of *Infidelity*, and
the Means to be us'd in Opposing the Same, as far as
relates to the Clergy of the Establish'd Church.

By *JOHN DUDLEY*, M. A.
Archdeacon of *Bedford*.

Publish'd at the Request of the CLERGY.

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A

CHARGE to the *CLERGY*

At a

V I S I T A T I O N

Held at *B E D F O R D*,*April 5th, 1733.*

Reverend Brethren,

AS I had the Happiness of some previous Acquaintance with a pretty many of you, through my Attendances on our honoured Diocesan at his Primary and last Triennial Visitation; I purposely omitted for Two or Three Visitations past, to suggest any Thing by Way of Advice from this Place, knowing in the Main that you were a Body of regular, well-behaved Clergy, such as discharged the Duties of your Calling in a laudable Manner, and recommended by your Examples those practical Rules

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which

which you expounded to others. For this Reason I thought it unnecessary both for you and my self, to give you a long Detail of those several Duties, which you are so well acquainted with, and which have been the standing Topicks of Discourses of this Kind, insomuch that most Clergymen's private Studies are furnish'd with a sufficient Number of 'em in Print, and an Addition thereunto would seem rather superfluous.

But as Times and Circumstances are continually changing, as well as Bodies and Societies of Men, 'tis unavoidable but that some new Matters will arise, which may require and even demand our most serious Consideration.

'Tis evident that the Spirit of Infidelity has made a much greater Progress amongst us in a few Years, than, as we can learn from any History extant, it has ever before done in any Length or Period of Time whatever. Now this is a Matter of vast Concern to us of the Clergy, two different Ways, as it has a direct Tendency to affect us in our private, as well as publick Capacity; as in Tract of Time it will probably injure us in our Properties, and as we already find the bad Effects of it in Regard to our Functions. To the
first

first of these Suggestions I shall say but little, for shou'd that at any Time hereafter be the Case, I know not which Way we shall obtain Redress. Our Business is to be Obedient to the Laws; and not only so, but likewise to exhort others to a mutual Obedience and Observance of the same, and that not merely from a Principle of Fear, and for the escaping Punishment, but as the Scripture directs, for Conscience Sake. This we are all sensible our most holy Religion obliges us to; and therefore as the Disposal of such Events are lodg'd in other Hands, we must endeavour to comport our selves in the best Manner we are able, casting all our Care upon God, in a full Assurance that he still careth for us. Thus much I shall observe in general, that the whole Body of the Clergy have for many Years past, behaved in as dutiful and peaceable a Manner towards the Government, as any equal Number of Men, of what Rank or Profession soever. And I must do the Administration the Justice to confess, that they themselves seem to have made the like Observation, and in Requital have dispersed by a timely Interposition some ill-boding Storms that were gathering against us.

As for my second Suggestion, the great and
visible

visible Decay of Christian Piety is too certain
 a Proof of what I have asserted. Indeed I
 am far from imagining that the Utmost we
 can say, or do, or write, will be sufficient to
 stop the Growth of Infidelity. It has already
 taken such deep Root, and spreads its nume-
 rous Branches so wide, that the Engines of
 the World must be set to work, before it can
 be check'd, much less extirpated. This when
 ever it be done, must be a national Concern,
 and must have the Influence of the Great and
 Powerful to effect it. Nothing less than this,
 I fear, will have its due Weight and wish'd for
 Success: For tho' Arguments in great Abun-
 dance, strong and even unanswerable, have
 not been wanting on the Side of Religion;
 yet Men of Pleasure and Luxury, of Fortune
 and Opulency, such as abound in the World,
 and by their misapplied Wealth seem to carry
 almost every Thing before them, will not take
 the Pains to search into the Evidences of their
 Religion, but hastily run away with any ill-
 grounded Opinions, provided they do but tal-
 ly with their Lusts and Appetites, and give
 them no uneasy Reflections under the full En-
 joyment of their sensual Delights. So that
 under such unhappy Circumstances as these,
 we have but a melancholy Prospect before us,
 and

and can little expect an Amendment of Things, unless those in the highest Stations of all, such as are vested with Authority, and whose Examples will always have the greatest Weight on the Bulk of the People; I say, unless they shall think fit to set about some Expedient for the discountenancing Infidelity, the constant Parent of Immorality and Profaneness; and for the promoting in its stead true Virtue and Goodness, which are only to be found in the Religion we profess.

Virtue and Infidelity are incompatible Characters; and however some Men may have refined upon Virtue, exclusive of Religion; yet when we come to lay aside the several positive Restraints or Encouragements of the Gospel, which have so powerful an Influence over the different Hopes and Fears of Men; we shall soon find that Virtue will be little more than nominal, and few will pursue it as its own Reward.

If we cast our Eyes round about, we shall perceive this to be the Case. According to the gradual Increase of Infidelity, Vice of all Sorts has abounded more and more: And tho' perhaps in our Country-Retirements we may not hitherto be so sensible of the pernicious Effects and Consequences of it; yet as it is so
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industriously propagated at this time of Day, and meets with such Numbers of Profelytes among People of almost every Rank and Condition in the most populous Cities, in that especially, where Men from all Parts of the Kingdom do at one Time or other resort, either for the carrying on of Commerce and executing Business of sundry Kinds, or for the Sake of Company and Pleasure, and those worldly Diversions which the Idle and Thoughtless are daily pursuing ; I am afraid a few Years will convince us, that hardly any Corner of the Nation will be free from its Infection, notwithstanding our utmost Efforts and Labours to the contrary.

Under such Difficulties, and such a declining State of Religion, it may be proper here to resolve one Question, which naturally offers it self ; and that is, How are the Clergy to behave in these Circumstances ; Because others despise the Offices of Religion, shou'd they become careless in the Performance of them ? By no Means: Tho' as Matters now stand, we cannot expect to be so successful in our Ministrations, as we have reason to wish ; nevertheless let us Endeavour in our several Stations, to do all the Good we possibly can ; and by preserving at all Times this Ground of Re-
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joycing, the Testimony of our Consciences, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, we have had our Conversation in a corrupt and unbelieving World; let it serve to excite us to redouble our Vigilance, that we may continually be in such a Posture of Defence, as powerfully to resist the Attacks of Infidelity under all the Disguises and Pretences of Reason; and by a skilful Use of our spiritual Weapons, that we may be able to shew ourselves more than Conquerors. By this Means, whether Men will hear, or whether they will forbear, we shall be able to render a just Account of our Ministry at the great Day of Retribution, inasmuch as through a fervent Mind, a ready Will, and an upright Heart, we have discharged the Labour and Business of our Vocation as faithful Stewards of the Mysteries of God.

'Tis a melancholy Consideration to reflect, how greatly the very best of Things are often intermixed with an Allay of the worst. 'Tis demonstrable that the *Church of England* by Law established, is the farthest removed from Corruption of all Sorts, and consequently approaches nearest to the Simplicity of the Gospel, and likewise to the Practice of the Primitive Church, of any distinct Communion professing

feſſing Chriſtianity. We may juſtly therefore lament, that there ſhould be any ſo unreaſonable as to ſeparate themſelves from ſo uncorrupt a Worſhip as is preſcribed by our Church; much more that others in great Numbers ſhould be found, ſo daring and impious, as to ſtrive to overthrow the whole Fabrick of Chriſtianity, and blot out all Religion from the Minds of Men.

I believe as far as it is permitted for us finite Creatures, to look into the Ways and Workings of Providence, we may ſafely conclude, that God has had ſo ſpecial a Regard to the Purity of our Church ſince the Times of the Reformation, as on that Account to have interpoſed in a ſignal and miraculous Manner for the Preſervation of the Rights and Liberties of the People, when at different Times and by various Meaſures, they have ſeem'd to be brought to the very Brink of Deſtruction. I think this Opinion has no Occaſion for any other Support, if we only conſider that ſome ſpecial Inſtances of the Dangers alluded to, and the remarkable Deliverances wrought thereupon, are adopted into the Offices of the national Church.

We have ſufficient Intimations from Scripture, that God Almighty ordinarily deals with
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States and Communities, according to their Inclinations to, or Deflections from Virtue ; that Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People ; that therefore a general Practice of Sin and Wickedness, has a Tendency to plunge Mankind into Ruin and Desolation, in Regard to their temporal Circumstances and Conditions. And indeed the Reasonableness of God's acting after this Manner is sufficiently evident, because publick Societies of Men consider'd as such, can only be rewarded or punished in this World, their common Existence as one Body, extending no farther than the present Life. So that notwithstanding the many signal Deliverances vouchsafed to this Church and Nation heretofore, we have now very little Reason to depend upon the extraordinary Mercies of Almighty God, considering the strange Profanations of his Holy Name, the daily Insults offer'd to his Religion, and the subsequent Contempt of the Ministers thereof.

As far therefore as the monstrous Sin of Infidelity, is likely to involve us in the common Calamity ; it may be proper to consider, what Influence this ought to have upon our Conduct, knowing that we are set in the Midst of so many and great Dangers.

The more we seclude our selves from the mean and low Diversions of the World, the more likely we shall be to keep our Characters unfullied, and to preserve that Esteem from our respective Congregations, which the Importance of our Office may justly claim. For if at any Time they see us sink below our Characters, they will not only be offended, as they have Cause to be, but in Case of a frequent Repetition herein, they will grow regardless of our most serious Instructions. The Generality of the People will hardly make Allowances for the most common Failings in Men of our Order, and therefore the ready Way to avoid Censure, is to withdraw our selves from all those Kinds of Assemblies, which under the Notion of Pleasure are principally calculated for the promoting of Vice.

But as Mankind in general are desirous of Society, and as Men of our Profession, by Reason of the great Advantages of Education, are commonly well qualified for the Enjoyment of Conversation; I think a friendly and unreserved Correspondence amongst our own Order ought always to be encouraged, as far as is suitable and not detrimental either to our respective Studies or Circumstances.

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By such frequent Intercourses as are here mentioned, all those several unaccountable Prejudices, which are sometimes seen even among Men of Education, will insensibly vanish and disappear; and the Practice of derogating from each other's Qualifications, will be look'd upon with Abhorrence, as having no better Foundation than what arises from Self-Opinion, and the Ignorance we have of other Mens Talents.

Neither are these the principal Advantages accruing hereby; for by this Means we shall have an Opportunity of communicating our Sentiments to each other concerning the more abstruse Points of Divinity, and of receiving such casual Hints from each other, as may much facilitate the Course of our Studies. For as Men according to their various Inclinations and Opportunities of Life, are led into different Branches of Learning; so the Abundance of some in one Kind of Learning may be happily made to supply the Deficiency of others, who yet may excel in a different Way, and consequently a reciprocal Improvement may result there-from. This to a Man of common Ingenuity will certainly be the most agreeable, as well as inoffensive Way of spending his Leisure Hours, when his Mind
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is relaxed from the Cares and Duties of his parochial Charge. However I am far from advising the Clergy to shun all those who are of a different Profession, or such as possibly may not have had the same Advantages of Education with themselves. On the Contrary, I would rather perswade them, to have frequent Interviews with the most understanding Part of their Neighbours, and especially to pay all decent and suitable Regard to those, whose superior Circumstances do usually lead to a greater Measure of Respect, tho' it be not directly in their Power either to injure or assist us.

Such a Behaviour will gradually lessen the Prejudices of Men, by what Means soever they have been formed against us, and will make them the more easily overlook any slight Miscarriages, which through Surprise or Inadvertence we may have the Misfortune to fall into, and which even the wisest of Men are not always able to prevent. Whereas an absolutely reclusive Life renders us liable to divers Inconveniencies: For whatever the Motives may be in themselves, which lead to such a singular Method of Living, the Generality of Mankind will be apt to impute it to something amiss, to Moroseness, Hypocrisy,

crisy, or a Defect of Understanding, or to any other wrong Disposition which they hear comes nearest to the particular Temper and Constitution of a Man. Thus by Degrees, a Person, perhaps of great intrinsic Worth and Learning, will come to be despised and ridiculed, and what is still worse, 'tis probable some of the more brutish and ill-principled Part of his Parish, will take all Opportunities to injure him in his Property; either totally to secrete and plunder him of his Dues, or to withhold them till they are obliged by a Process at Law to make Compensation on that Behalf. Thus it comes to pass, that Men of Virtue and Knowledge are sometimes thrown into a Scene of Vexation, which has been known to end in the Ruin of their Circumstances, and moreover has helped to shorten their Days.

It must be confessed, that such Misfortunes as these have sometimes befallen Men of the most affable and engaging Dispositions. But upon Examination it will generally, if not always, be found, that the Seeds of Discontent were sown before-hand, during the Incumbency of those, who were less careful of observing such prudential Maxims as I have now been speaking of. So that it appears
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from hence, how vigilant the Clergy ought to be, in not suffering any Inconveniencies of this Nature to arise by their own injudicious Conduct and Behaviour, and that not only as it will affect their own Ease and Interest, but also as in all Probability it will entail Mischief even upon their Successors.

After all that has been said upon this Point, it must be owned, that such Observations will extend but to few of the Clergy in Comparison of the whole, because generally speaking, the greatest Danger lies the opposite Way. Too great a Degree of Retirement is seldom found, but in the most learned of their respective Professions: And therefore the Splendor of Wealth and the Hopes of Preferment are apt to draw off too many from a just Attendance upon their proper Studies, and by Degrees to enlist them into all the several Diversions of the Great, which in Process of Time become habitual to them. What the Consequences of such Compliances are, I shall rather chuse to leave to your own Observations, than enter into a distinct Recital of them. However this Instance suggests another obvious Reason, why Men of the best Learning ought not to shut themselves up from the World, but at proper Intervals should

should associate themselves with their own Parishioners, and especially with those Persons in their respective Neighbourhoods, whose Fortunes admit of the greatest Resort of Company to their Houses.

But before I mention the Reason it self, I shall remove one Objection which lies in the Way. 'Tis known that Places of the largest Concourse, are usually attended with such a Mixture of Company, as is not at all agreeable to Men of Virtue and Sobriety; and therefore that it is unavoidable but that the Discourse will sometimes turn upon such obnoxious Points, as may justly offend a chaste Ear. But in Answer to this, if a Man's own personal Innocence may be preserv'd in the worst of Company, as no one can deny; I think the Objection ceases at once. And therefore the Reason is plain, because in such Cases, a Clergyman of Reputation, may be able to give a Check to the whole Discourse; or at least may be able to guard tender Minds from imbibing the Infection; or lastly, may be instrumental in reforming those who have been long accustomed to such licentious Practices.

So much Weight will the Conversation of the more learned and pious Clergy obtain in the World ; whereas a Man of slender Abilities, such a one as is most liable to be drawn aside, and led into the Corruptions and Follies of Mankind, only serves in such Circumstances, to enhance the Ridicule of the profane and wicked, and by that Means becomes an Instrument in the Increase of Evil. So that a Minister of the Gospel, in Order to be Serviceable to the Cause of Religion, must always act up to the Dignity of his Character ; and if he is sensible that his own Qualifications are but scanty, he should rather debar himself from mixing with the World, and entering into the more publick and general Associations, for Fear of being drawn into Temptation and Vanity, in Proportion to his Want of Stability and Learning.

'Tis expected from Men of our Profession, to be ready always to give an Answer to every one that asketh us a Reason of our Christian Hope, and of the several Doctrines founded thereon. And I must add likewise, that since Men have sought out so many Inventions, in order to undermine and root out Christianity, we must spare no Pains, nor
omit

omit any Opportunities of weighing and considering, and if Occasion be, of refuting the several Arguments and Reasons, which are advanced to weaken the Evidences of our Religion. For tho' Men of Years and Experience, joined to a considerable Compass of Reading, may from their own Stock of Learning, be able to answer the Cavils of Infidelity; yet Men of fewer Years, and a smaller Proportion of Learning will often find themselves at a Loss, provided they neglect the Controversies on Foot, and are not conversant in the Writings on both Sides of the Question, both of them that oppose, and them that defend the Christian Institution.

And indeed the Necessity of so doing will be still more evident, if we consider what unfair Artifices are constantly made Use of by the Advocates of Infidelity, how many false and partial Quotations from Writings of Antiquity; how many Quibbles and Subterfuges in Matters of mere Reason; and above all, what Loads of Calumny, Detraction, and Malice are continually poured out against the Clergy in general. Neither does their Inveteracy end here: What extraordinary Pains

have been taken of late to set at Nought the Labours, as well as Bounty of those, who have been concerned in the pious Education of Children ! What frivolous Applications to Political Theorems on that Account ; when in Truth instead of wanting a sufficient Number of Hands to carry on the Manufactures and Commerce of the Nation, the Probability seems to lie on the other Side of the Question; if any Judgment can be formed from that Multitude of Vagrants which are daily seen to infest our Streets. But such is the restless Spirit of Infidelity, that all Efforts are made to abolish the Seminaries of Learning and Religion, because the latter is usually grafted on the former, and can never be totally overthrown, so long as Learning is encouraged amongst us. And this seems to be the genuine Foundation of the greatest Part of that Heap of Calumny which is thrown upon the Clergy, and of the Aspersions which are cast upon our two Universities.

But whatever evil-minded Men may say to diminish the Success, or destroy the Prosperity of these two Fountains of Learning, they will still be treated with the highest Esteem by the virtuous Part of Mankind at
Home.

Home, and are consider'd by all learned Foreigners Abroad, as the Glory and Ornament of the *British* Nation.

Let the Result of what has been said be this, that since we are surrounded with uncommon Difficulties, let us take more than ordinary Pains to discharge the Duties of our Calling with the utmost Fidelity. Let us in all Things approve our selves as the Ministers of God, in much Patience; yea, if it should so happen, in Afflictions, in Necessities, and Distresses too: And that by the same Methods the Apostle recommends; by Purity, by Knowledge, by Long-suffering, by Kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by Love unfeigned, by the Word of Truth, by the Power of God, by the Armour of Righteousness on the right Hand and on the left. Tho' the Time is already come, wherein a great many will not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own Lusts are for heaping to themselves Teachers, even Teachers of Infidelity; let us not be discouraged so as to faint under our Burthen. Let us in Meekness instruct those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging the Truth; will cause the Clouds of Prejudice

Prejudice to be dispelled, and the Winds of Infidelity to be overblown. Let each of us be an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity. Let us at all Times take good Heed unto our selves; and unto our Doctrine; and continue therein, that by so doing we may both save our selves and them that hear us.

A
CHARGE to the *CLERGY*

At a
V I S I T A T I O N

Held at *AMP HILL*,

April 30th, 1736.

I Should more frequently address my Reverend Brethren when assembled in this Manner, were I conscious that any Endeavours of mine would be of the least Service to any of them in Particular, or of the smallest Advantage to the Cause of Religion in General. Never was any Nation more happy in the Means and Opportunities of Knowledge, and of the various Methods of Information concerning the whole of our Duty to God and Man: Never had any
People

People, I believe, more Advantages from the pious and painful Labours of their Predecessors in Regard to the whole Compass of Literature, both Human and Divine, than those of the Communion whereunto we belong. And therefore it seems in a good Measure unnecessary for any private Attempts to add to the Labours of those, who have gone before us. But as a strict Attendance on Matters of Duty in our Order is always necessary, so a just Recommendation thereof at some proper Intervals, will never, I presume, be deemed unseasonable.

And indeed such is the transient State of all sublunary Things, that as almost every fresh Return of these Sorts of Assemblies, brings some new Members along with it; so it may be expedient every now and then to offer some Monitions for a regular Discharge of the Ministerial Office, especially to those who are but newly adopted into the Work of the Ministry, and whose Want of Age and Experience may reasonably be supposed to admit of Information.

It is indeed a melancholy Consideration, but so it is, that Religion is at the lowest Ebb imaginable, and that Vice and Immorality

lity do every where abound. A large Share of the People seem totally regardless of the Sense and Spirit and Nature of Religion; whilst others of a different Turn of Mind, are doing all they can to new-mould and fashion it, nay to corrupt and adulterate it; and some are striving to banish it out of the World. The Generality of Mankind are either so intoxicated with Luxury and Pleasure, or overcome with Indolence and Inconsideration, or given up to Debauchery and Wickedness of all Kinds; that all we can possibly say or do, all that the Clergy can invent or write, will, I am afraid, be insufficient for a thorough Reformation in these depraved Days, unless we have the Aid and Assistance of the Powerful and Mighty, unless we be strengthened and supported by the Rulers of this World.

However this is so far from being a Reason why Men of our Profession should grow cold and heartless, or fall into a State of Supineness and Despondency; that we ought much rather to increase our Diligence in the Work of our Calling, remembering still that we are under the good Providence of a gracious and merciful God, who can, if he sees fit, not only turn the Hearts of the Disobedient to the

Wisdom of the Just ; but also in the Midst of the greatest Tryals and Temptations can point out a Way for the Righteous to escape the Pollutions and Defilements of the World.

Such has been the Care, and Wisdom, and Piety of those who have heretofore had the Direction of Ecclesiastical Affairs, that we find the Sum of our Duty completely defined and described to us in the several Canons, Injunctions, and Rubricks subsisting in our Church. Every Thing that may help either to regulate our own Conduct, or tend to the Edification of those committed to our Charge, may with the greatest Readiness be found therein. A frequent Perusal therefore of these established Rules and Directions of the Church, is what I would above all Things recommend to those of my Brethren, who have but newly been admitted into Holy Orders.

'Tis too frequent in the World to have Things neglected merely for carrying the Face of Antiquity ; as if Nothing could be pleasing but that only which appeared in a modern Dress, and that new Inventions were always best. A Disposition of this Kind has been the Cause of a great Deal of Error at one Time or other, and Men of good Understanding and In-

Ingenuity have even split upon this Rock! Because some of the more ancient Canons and Constitutions are now out of Date, that can be no Argument at all against the Use of the Rest. The Exigency of those Times wherein they were made, might and did require a Number of such as cannot be of any Concern or Import to us, as will plainly appear upon a cursory View of the History of those Times, and the different Occasions whereupon they were made. But still the main Body of the several Canons and Constitutions of our Church, are and always will be of standing Use, so long as it pleases God to continue us a Church. A competent Knowledge therefore in this Kind of Learning, is what every Clergyman ought to be furnished withal. This is the Way not only to keep him steady in the right and regular Performance of his own Duty; but will be a Means likewise of defending him from the Impositions and Encroachments of such as are ready for Enterprises of that Kind.

I believe there are but few amongst us, who are not too sensible of a strong Propension throughout the greater Part of the People for Works of that Nature. We find upon Experience that the Bulk of our Congregations, I mean in Villages and Country Towns, are

not only extremely defective in Christian Knowledge, but in numberless Instances they seem unacquainted with the common Sentiments of Humanity. And therefore they are so far from esteeming us in Love for our Work Sake, that on the Contrary they frequently pride themselves in an Opposition to what they do but suspect will be agreeable to their Minister. Neither is this the worst Side of the Case : for we frequently meet with Attempts from some of them, even to secrete and withhold what the Laws of the Land have allotted for our Subsistence. And if they cannot bring their Purposes to bear, they usually betake themselves to cast Aspersions upon our Persons and Characters, and seldom stick to calumniate, or ridicule our good Works.

These are Difficulties which I know not well how we can extricate our selves from, or by what Means we can obtain sufficient Redress. If we betake our selves to Methods which the Laws direct in Vindication of our Rights or injured Characters, 'tis no unusual Thing for the more obstinate and illiterate Sort immediately to turn their Backs upon the Church to desert and forsake its Worship and Communion. The next Step is to shelter them-

themselves in a Conventicle, and by this Means they imagine, they shall fully avenge themselves upon their own Pastor, by running into the Embraces of such as are industrious to promote Separation from the Church, to foment and encourage Divisions and Schisms. So that if we do but offer to make any Remonstrance against their Ill-Treatment, and will not submit to be imposed upon at every Occasion; 'tis a Hazard but we lose a Part of our Congregations, as well as undergo a Deal of Reproach, of Calumny and Slander at the same Time.

The Indulgence allowed to Scrupulous Consciences, is a Thing in it self most certainly well intended. A Man of Candour and Moderation will make great Allowances for the Misapprehensions of Sober-minded People. And therefore the Indulgence granted to Dissenters merely on Account of their religious Doubts and Scruples of Mind, is a Thing highly reasonable, under the proper Limitations provided by Law. However I cannot but bewail, that even the best of Things, are sometimes perverted to ill Uses. This was certainly very far from the Intention of the Law, that those Persons should have any Manner of Benefit thereby, who desert their
own.

own Pastor out of Spite and Ill-will, and purely to gratify their ill-grounded Resentments. And if this be not Reason sufficient for quite Shutting up that Door, as I will not take upon me to say it is; I am certain 'tis an incontestable Argument, why that Door should be made no wider, why the Fences and Boundaries of the Church should not be thrown up or enlarged. The late Attempts of the Dissenters cannot but afford just Matter of Surprise, if we only examine a little into the Unreasonableness of their Expectations.

The Constitution of this Nation is known to consist of two Parts, Ecclesiastical and Civil. And these two Parts of the Constitution are so interwoven and blended together, that the main Body of our Laws have a mutual Reference and Allusion to each. 'Tis vastly surprizing therefore that the Dissenters, who have an avowed Disaffection to one Part of the Constitution, should have the Confidence to attempt a Repeal of the *Test Act*, which was provided for a Security to the present Establishment both in Church and State. Have the Dissenters ever been able to prove that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is an unlawful Test? Supposing the Sacrament has at any Time been profaned on
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this Account; is the *Church of England* chargable with that, or will not the Guilt of such Profanation rest on the Heads of them only, who have received it unworthily? Does the *Church of England* oblige any One, not being duly prepared, to go directly and receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, contrary to the Terms and Directions of the Gospel? No One can affirm this consistently with Truth.

If the Dissenters will depart from the best constituted Church in the World, where there are no unlawful Terms of Communion imposed upon them, and where every Thing relating to Doctrine or Worship is founded on Scripture, and built upon the Model of the Primitive Church; this is certainly a very insufficient Reason, why the Legislative Power should alter the Constitution to gratify them, at the certain Expence of disobliging the Bulk of the Nation in general: For it must be allowed that the Dissenters only, are but a small and inconsiderable Number of People, in Comparison of the Members of the Established Church.

With what Face can a Set of People under such Circumstances attempt an Alteration or Repeal of the Laws? Surely instead of aiming
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at any Innovations or Infringements upon our Church, they ought to be well satisfied and sincerely thankful for those ample Indulgences they have hitherto enjoy'd, whereby they are set free from all Manner of Persecution on Account of their Dissentions, and have moreover a Liberty of worshipping God in their own Way.

But so far from having a grateful Sense of these Advantages, we find them on the Contrary most heavily complaining and venting their Spleen, for not having a share in those Offices of Trust, which the Wisdom of the Legislature has thought proper to confine within the Members of the national Established Church. And in Order to support their unreasonable Pretensions, they make a mighty stir about their Natural Rights; as if those Rights, as they are pleased to call them, were an indisputable Plea for an Admission to Power. But if this Plea of theirs proves any Thing at all, will it not be found to prove too much? Do they not forget, that this very Argument will hold for the Papists as well as themselves? I would therefore hereupon ask the Dissenters one short Question; Do they think that the Papists ought to be trusted with Power and the Administration of the Laws?

Laws? I believe I may venture to take it for granted, that they would answer in the Negative. And the most obvious Reason for such an Answer would be, the Disaffection which the Papists are conceived to have, to our present Establishment in Church and State. And will not the same Reason hold good for excluding the Dissenters, in Regard to their Disaffection to one Part of the Constitution? I aver that it will. What! is the Purity of that Doctrine, and the Manner of that Worship prescribed by our Church, of so little Concern, as to be given up at the Clamours of some presumptuous Sectaries?

They would indeed be thought to have an extraordinary and uncommon Degree of Zeal for the Support of the Government, and the Civil Administration in the Protestant Line. But can it be thought reasonable, that one part of our Constitution should be given up as a Compliment on that Account? Allowing what they assert to be true in Respect to their Attachment to the secular Branch; I would fain know what extraordinary merit they can raise from hence? Surely this is but a just Tribute for the Security of their Persons, and those several Immunities wherewith the Laws of the Land have thought fit to indulge them.

And therefore how plausible soever they may imagine it to be, certainly this is but a shallow Pretence. For can it be supposed, that there is any Thing more in this pretended Zeal of theirs, than as it is founded in an Opposition to the unwarrantable Claims in Behalf of a Popish Administration and Government? And may it not be said, without derogating from their Zeal in this Particular, that the Clergy and People of the *Church of England* are as little desirous of a Popish Administration, as the warmest of them?

If the Toleration should ever be permitted to break in upon the Establishment, what will become of the Merit of that Revolution, which we yearly commemorate as a Day of Thanksgiving? The Security of our Constitution in both its Branches, was the principal Business of that happy Revolution. And as the Laws now stand upon that Foot, there is so close a Connection between Church and State, that the Security of the Former is, in every respect, as much the Concern of the Administration, as the Welfare of the Latter. So that if the Roman Catholicks are justly subjected to divers Limitations on Account of their Disaffection to both Branches of the Constitution; certainly the Dissenters are as justly

justly subjected to an Incapacity of holding Offices and Places of Trust, by Reason of their Disaffection to the Established Church. If the Dissenters could convince Mankind in general, that in making the *Church of England* a Fundamental Part of the Constitution, our Ancestors had established a corrupted Faith and Worship; I must own in such Case, their Applications to the Legislature would be very just and proper. This whenever they have attempted to do, they have constantly been defeated and put to silence. But notwithstanding they have never yet been able to do this, they still insist upon their natural Rights, and call out for Power to enable them to vanquish by Force and Strength, what they never could do by Reason and Argument.

If it be lawful for the Civil Power to protect and assist the Church, or to support Religion by the Influence of any Human Authority whatsoever; then certainly there can be no just Ground of Complaint in Regard to the Privileges annexed to our Church. Neither can any good Reason be given, why the Church once constituted by publick Authority, should not require some authentick Testimony and Evidence of Assent, some Assurance of Conformity both to its Doctrine and Discipline,

cipline, from those that are to be employed in its publick Ministrations. If there ought to be Churches at all in the World, (as according to Scripture Rule 'tis certain there ought) then there is an absolute Necessity of a special Designation of Persons for the Ministry, because the very Form and Essence of a Church consists in the Exercise of Ministerial Acts, in the Preaching of the Word, and Administration of the Sacraments. Does not the Thing therefore speak it self, that for the Preservation of Order and Decency in the Church, there must be Authority somewhere lodged, to admit or exclude such Persons as offer themselves for the Work of the Ministry.

Where then is the Hardship of Tests and Subscriptions, so loudly complained of by the Adversaries of the Church? Nothing is more certain than that every Man has a Right to use his own Judgment in Matters of Religion. A blind Obedience, or an implicit Faith, is in no wise a Doctrine of the *Church of England*. As the Scripture alone is the true Rule of Faith, every Man is concerned to make the best Enquiries he can into the Sense and Meaning contained therein. But is not this a manifest Reason, why the Church in like Manner ought to judge for it self? Shall every
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Individual in the Commonwealth have a Right to make Enquiry into the Meaning of Scripture, and to form a Judgment in Pursuance thereof; and shall not the Church have a Liberty to do the same? Surely no One can deny that Privilege to the Church, which every Christian has a Title to claim. This is so plain a Case, that I wonder any serious and considerate Person should possibly mistake it.

The Church in ordaining Men for the Ministry executes a Trust, for which She stands accountable to Almighty God, for a right and regular Discharge of the same. By whose Judgment then in a Case of that Moment, shall the Church be determined; ought She not in all Reason to be determined by her own? Yes certainly. Nothing can be plainer or more evident than this. For as every private Man's Judgment is allowed to be the Measure of his own Conduct, the Case is the same, or rather somewhat stronger, in Regard to those, who are legally vested with publick Authority. This has been the standing Practice of all Nations and religious Communities; yea, even where Men of the same Perswasion with the Dissenters themselves have been in Authority, 'tis notorious that they have constantly rejected every Thing
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that had an Aspect towards a Comprehension, alledging that it would be establishing Iniquity by a Law. And therefore it was a heavy Implication of a mean Opinion of Persons at the Helm, to think they were so regardless of the Interests of Religion, as to give up one main Branch of the Constitution, at the Clamours of a few intemperate Schismatics, in Contradiction to the Judgment of the more cool and considerate Part among their own Body; and according to my View of Things, is such a Piece of Boldness offer'd towards the Administration, as even to deserve some publick Mark of Reproof. I shall close this Point in the Words of a Judicious Writer on the same Occasion :

“ If the Members of the *Church of England*
 “ are obliged in their own Defence to expose
 “ the Dissenters to Resentment, they only are
 “ answerable for it, who give the Occasion.
 “ We have lived with them inoffensively for
 “ many Years; they have had the full Enjoy-
 “ ment of their own Opinions, and the Profes-
 “ sion of them, uninterrupted and unenvied.
 “ From the private Members of our Church
 “ they have met with no Insults or Revilings,
 “ but a neighbourly, Christian Correspondence.
 “ From our Clergy they have received every
 “ In-

“ Instance of Brotherly Charity which our
 “ Religion requires to be shewn to Persons of
 “ different Perswasions; from His Majesty
 “ they have met with as much Grace and Fa-
 “ vour as is consistent with our Constitution;
 “ from our Constitution, as much Indulgence
 “ as the Wisdom of the Legislature thought
 “ it safe to grant them; more than any
 “ other Dissenters from an Established Go-
 “ vernment, ever enjoyed, more than they
 “ themselves ever granted, whenever they
 “ had it in their Power to discourage different
 “ Perswasions. And yet, these Men, so high-
 “ ly favoured, so peculiarly indulged, far
 “ from being thankful, not in the least sensi-
 “ ble of their Happiness, accuse the Legisla-
 “ ture of Oppression; the Bishops and Clergy
 “ of Tyrannical Pride and Ambition; the
 “ whole Communion with the Want of a
 “ Spirit of Religion, Honour, and Liberty;
 “ the whole World, who think Establishments
 “ and Disqualifications lawful, of Bigotry and
 “ Self-interest; Thus with an Air of Infalli-
 “ bility, they complain of Bigotry; of Self-
 “ interest, and Ambition, while they are im-
 “ petuously pushing for Places of Honour and
 “ Profit. In the Spirit of Bitterness they
 “ rave against Persecution; their Charity
 “ they

“ they shew by rash Censures and unjust Re-
 “ proaches ; their Moderation by Clamours
 “ and Threatnings ; their Loyalty by fed-
 “ tious Attempts to set the Nation in a
 “ Flame. This is the Temper, this the Be-
 “ haviour, by which they expect to recom-
 “ mend, or rather force themselves into
 “ Power.”

I hope I shall not be understood, as if I de-
 signed, or even wished, to set on Foot any ri-
 gorous Methods: That is far from my Inten-
 tion. What I chiefly aim at is, to point out
 the Necessity of being upon our Guard ; that
 we may always be found in a prepared Condi-
 tion to defend ourselves against the Attacks of
 our Enemies. But in chusing out our Weapons
 for these Encounters, let us principally rely
 on the Armour of sound and unbiass'd Rea-
 son: And in the Management hereof, let us
 not endeavour to make it too sharp or cutting,
 but rather let it be prudently and cautious-
 ly temper'd with the mild Ingredients recom-
 mended in the Gospel. If it be possible, as
 the Apostle advises, *as much as in us lies*, that
 is to say, without any mean or dishonest Com-
 pliances, *let us live peaceably with all Men*;
 To which I shall add, let us admonish
 others to do the Like. Let us frequently re-
 mind

mind our several Auditories of the Necessity of Peace and Good-will to each other ; of the Fitness of such a Frame and Disposition of Mind to carry us on towards Holiness and Obedience to the Gospel ; and lastly, of the great Rewards which are promised by our Saviour to them that make Peace, that thereby they are entitled to the gracious Appellation of the Children of God.

These Measures ought steadily to be pursued, in Point of Prudence as well as Duty. There is more than ordinary Occasion at this Time of Day, to be particularly cautious of giving Offence, that upon any just Cause of Complaint the Ministry might not be blamed. 'Tis our Misfortune that we are not only to combat with Heresies and Schisms, and with Ignorance and Obstinacy in the meaner Sort ; but also with outrageous Infidelity, having, or at least pretending to have, an Appearance of Knowledge. The evil Suggestions of this Spirit of Antichrist, have but too visibly appeared in those numerous Reproaches and frequent Attacks which have been made upon our Order. What the Consequence of this may be in Time, I know not. But sure I am, that unless we were in Possession of a better Scheme, unless we had

a more consistent Model of a new Building ; common Prudence might teach us not to pull down That wherein we were bred and born, rather than after having so done, to lie naked and exposed without the Hopes and Expectations of a Life to come, without any Manner of Dependance upon those future Rewards, which are most assuredly brought to Light and manifested to the World by the Gospel of Christ.

It must be owned by all impartial Men, and it much redounds to the Honour of our Profession, that all the Adversaries of the Christian Religion that have been hardy enough to appear in Print, have been thoroughly defeated and compleatly answered by worthy and learned Writers from among ourselves. So that the Clergy have not been wanting in the Performance of their Part for stemming this Tide, these Overflowings of Ungodliness. Whether others have done so much as might have been expected on this Account, I cannot take upon me to say, This one Thing I may venture to observe, that great Lenity towards such Miscreants may be misapplied, even with Regard to the Ordinances of Men. For how industrious soever some Men may have been to remind us that Christ's
King.

Kingdom is not of this World ; yet certainly it will be allowed by all Christians at least, that his Religion is, and that it ought to be the first and principal Concern of as many as believe the Gospel of Christ. Is not every Seventh Day apportioned by Law for the Service of God ? And is not the whole System of the Laws themselves drawn up in Subordination to the Precepts of Christianity ? Such Misdemeanors therefore as I have been speaking of, are doubtless within the Reach of the Law, and as such I shall leave them to the Consideration of those, who have a more immediate Concern in the Dispensation of Justice.

Altho' the Clergy of the Established Church cannot be said to lie under any absolute Discouragements, but such as proceed from Irreligion, and the gradual Increase of Immorality and Licentiousness ; yet, as I apprehend, 'twould be no small Satisfaction to the Body in general, to be indulged with an Opportunity of trying their Abilities in a Collective Capacity ; to see if they could possibly do any Thing more effectual than that they have already done, towards suppressing the Contagion and Predominancy of Vice. This, next to the Endeavours of the Great and Powerful, seems

to be the most probable Means, according to my Apprehension, of putting a Check to the Growth of Atheistical Principles, and to the fatal Consequences which will naturally and unavoidably issue therefrom. And the Reason of this is, I think, evident ; because in such Case, there would be a number of the most able Hands always ready to defend the Concerns of Religion, in Proportion to the Attacks which are made upon it. And it might reasonably be presumed that in this Capacity, all the several Parts of the Christian Religion, which may happen to be assaulted by the Pens of Unbelievers, would be substantially defended under the united Labours of so able a Body, having the Aids and Assistances of all Manner of Learning, to be mutually supplied, as Occasion should require. This to me is a convincing Argument of the Usefulness and Expediency of Ecclesiastical Conventions. And this I take to be the Reason why all Communities whatever, where Christianity is publicly establish'd by Law, have their peculiar Synods, and stated Times of assembling for the Purposes of Religion, pursuant to the Frame of their respective Establishments. Neither can any one sufficient Reason be given for the total Disuse of such Kind of Assemblies. 'Tis possible

possible indeed, that Reasons of State may sometimes require a Temporary Discontinuance. Of that I cannot pretend to judge. But certainly no Objections against Ecclesiastical Synods will hold in the General, as if they were never of Service to the Cause of Religion. To instance in the main Objection of all : Supposing some Persons thro' the Warmth of their Imaginations, and the Strength of their Zeal, have been carried to some Lengths, even in religious Debates, which on cool Deliberation and serious Reflection they would have chosen to have shunn'd ; certainly this is but a slender Objection to be put in the Balance against the several Advantages of new Lights and Discoveries, which are usually struck out on those Occasions. This therefore is so far from being a substantial Objection against the Necessity of Ecclesiastical Synods, that it is rather an additional Reason for their Continuance on the ancient Foot of Establishment.

'Tis impossible for publick Assemblies, as they are composed of a Number of Persons of various Talents and Opinions, to keep clear of every Extreme which may occasion some Degrees of Heat. The best conducted Assemblies in the World have always fallen short of such an Expectation. Some Men are
led

led by the Dictates of Conscience to oppose what others as heartily embrace, and in Cases of Intricacy 'tis not to be wonder'd at, if the Majority has sometimes been led on the wrong Side of the Point in Debate. And whenever this happens to be the Case, even the most religious and dispassionate Men may be agitated to a Degree, as to express some Vehemence in Support of their Opinions. This is unavoidable in all publick Assemblies, I mean of those set apart for Business, of what Denomination or Kind soever. Nay further, some Men will always be fond of displaying their Talents, and rather than fail of an Opportunity of so doing, will give into such Measures as cannot without Difficulty be accounted for by others. But whatever Motives such Proceedings may spring from, the Desire of excelling in any Art or Science is most certainly laudable, and ought to be encouraged with publick Rewards.

Wherever the contrary Practice prevails, and nothing is regarded in the Distribution of those Rewards, but particular Dependances on, or Alliances to great Men; under such Circumstances it cannot otherwise be expected but that Learning of course will quickly decline, as being deprived of the proper Sup-
ports

ports and Encouragements. And therefore such a wrong Disposition of the accustomed Rewards and Incentives to Merit, would soon have a very bad Effect in Seminaries of Learning, where Men are trained up under an Expectation of Preferment in Proportion to their Advancement in Years and Knowledge. If such a Method should ever come to be universally pursued, this would soon put Men on the Study of worldly Policy, more than Books, and consequently must end in a total Relaxation of Discipline and Order. Instead of a due and constant Application to Reading, instead of furnishing the Mind with a plentiful Store of Knowledge in the several Liberal Arts and Sciences; in this Case, they would be apt to take more Pains in adorning the Outside, and an Affectation of Dress and Politeness would probably take up the largest Share of their Time. Thus by Degrees they would naturally fall into those trifling Amusements which the Generality of the World, who have much Leisure and but little Learning, do usually busy themselves withal. Neither would this Evil stop here, for hereby would be laid a certain Foundation for Luxury and Want, for Extravagance and Irreligion, and a Train of Evils too many to be mentioned.

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The very Prospect of such a perverted State of Things, how distant soever, is enough to give some Uneasiness to a virtuous Mind, considering that we live in such a depraved Age, as that the utmost Vigilance, Circumspection, and Care will but barely be sufficient to preserve even the strictest and most retired Societies free from Infection. Such Persons therefore who have the Direction of Societies and Foundations for Learning, ought to yield a more than ordinary Inspection into the Behaviour of those committed to their Care. This is highly necessary at this Time of Day, for we find that great Numbers of People in the World, even some whom Gratitude ought to restrain, are fond of every Opportunity of detracting from the Merit, and disputing the Usefulness of those pious Foundations, and would be glad, as I imagine, to see them utterly dissolved.

But be the Event as it will, it will always, as I conceive, be both for the Advantage and Credit of our Church, to take none into its Ministry, but such as have Testimonials of a regular Education, and are entitled thereunto by their respective Degrees. Instances to the contrary ought to be of a very extraordinary Nature indeed. Every Departure from this
Rule,

Rule, is as far as I am capable of judging, in some Measure an Injustice to our two Universities. And therefore according to my Apprehension, hardly any thing can justify in Point of Conscience an Act of this Kind, but where a Person duly qualified is really wanting, where the Number of such is actually deficient to supply the Exigencies and Vacancies in the Church. But as this cannot so much as be pretended with any Colour of Truth, no one Thing which has the least Tendency to bring the smallest Discredit on those two learned Bodies, ought to meet with any Countenance from a true Member of our Church.

These are my Sentiments of the Matter, and I hope at least, they are rightly founded. For if ever it should come to pass in future Times, that our Universities should be disregarded, that the learned Professors and Governors of Colleges should be slighted and overlook'd, that the publick Encouragements and Rewards of Merit should be diverted into another Channel, and the lowest of the Tribe advanced to the High Places on secular Accounts; If ever it should come to pass, that the most insignificant Tools of our Order, I mean with Regard to Ministerial Qualifications,

tions, either by Means of a casual Situation in a Corporation, or Borough, or near the Seat of a great Man, should stand a better Chance for attaining the most eminent Stations in the Church, than the most accomplished Professors and laborious Divines ; and that only for helping to carry on the secular Intrigues and worldly Contrivances of the Rich and the Great, and most probably too, under a proportionable Neglect of the several Duties of the Clerical Function ; if this State of Things should ever happen to take Place, 'twill be impossible for all Well-wishers to the Establish'd Church not to be under melancholy Apprehensions for the Consequences thereof.

The more eminent Stations and Ranks in the Church have generally been consider'd as the proper Rewards of Virtue and Merit. These therefore of Course are the great Incentives to Learning and Industry. So that if ever it should come to pass, that these Incentives should be cancelled, through a Misapplication of the Encouragements alluded to ; the Consequence must needs be a gradual Decay of Arts and Industry, and of the several Branches of Literature, human and divine. What therefore can be expected under
such

such Circumstances, but that a Flood of Ignorance should overspread the Nation in Tract of Time. I wish the Seeds of it are not preparing to be sown in the present Generation.

Let us therefore, my Brethren, having an Eye to the Difficulties and Dangers we are under, exert ourselves more abundantly in the Cause of Religion. There are none of us, how retired soever our Situation may be, but are supposed to have some Influence over our Congregations. And the World is not yet grown quite so bad, but that a worthy Clergyman will meet with some Regard, tho' probably not so much as he may deserve. What little Credit therefore we still retain, let it all be employed in the Advancement of Religion. Let us strictly adhere to that pure and uncorrupt Form which is taught in our Church, and which by the good Providence of Almighty God neither Infidels nor Sectaries have yet been able to overturn. And should our best Endeavours prove ineffectual to defend us from the Assaults of Infidelity and Schism, yet we have one Thing remaining which can never be unseasonably or overmuch used, and that is *Prayer*. Let us therefore be incessant in our Prayers to God, that he will be graciously pleased to protect and defend

send our Church; and to that End, that he will so Rule the Hearts, and dispose the Thoughts of all Orders and Degrees of Men amongst us, from the highest to the lowest, that they may ever seek God's Honour and Glory, and study the Preservation and Welfare of our Church. And being thus found to have a hearty Desire to pray; let us rely upon God for the Success of our Petitions, humbly imploring his divine Aid and Assistance, that we may be defended and comforted in all Dangers and Adversities, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

Sold by *T. Osborne* in *Gray's-Inn.*

The Rule of *Worship* in the *Church of England*, set forth and vindicated: A Visitation Sermon, 1729.

Two Discourses: wherein The Government of the *Church*, The Case of *Subscription*, and The Privileges of the *Clergy* are consider'd. 1731.

By *John Dudley*, M. A. Prebendary of *Lincoln*, and Chaplain to the Right Reverend *RICHARD*, Lord Bishop of that Diocese.





